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Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 12:47 PM
To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Subject: Public Comments MLPA Public Workshop, Feb. 6, 2008, Pacifica

RE: Public Comments MLPA Public Workshop, Feb. 6, 2008, Pacifica

In the past as an editor and writer for a major magazine that deals with recreational and travel subjects, I have written articles that have had a widespread and positive impact on protection of the marine environment. However, my interest in the current MLPA proposals for the North Central Coast is that of a citizen who believes that protection of wild areas and the species they support is essential. I attended the MLPA planning meeting in Pacifica on February 6 and have reviewed the documents and "side-by-side" maps detailing the five proposals currently under discussion. Here are a few observations and conclusions:

As acknowledged by the meeting moderators, the MLPA proposals represent a compromise between many interests. My overall impression is that the process has thus yielded proposals that are parsimonious at best and in some cases badly insufficient. It is clear that stakeholders with financial interests in the outcome have succeeded in winnowing the protected areas to such an extent as to cast doubt on whether the proposals meet the requirements of the California Marine Life Protection Act. For example, the requirement that the MPAs be networked is met mainly because they will share a common administration. However, with 20 miles or more of unprotected sea separating many of the protected enclaves, it is difficult to see how they are physically networked. Staff pointed out that currents will carry larvae from place to place, thus fulfilling part of the networking requirement.

Though there is some consistency between the five draft proposals, some of the proposals betray glaring lapses in the protection of critical areas. Draft proposals 2 (JD) and External Proposal A, for example, offer no protection to sensitive waters surrounding North Farallon Island.

Only Draft Proposal 4 (JC) offers to protect waters off San Gregorio State Beach. That means that the other four proposals are leaving unprotected more than 20 miles of San Mateo coastline between Pillar Point and Pigeon Point.

Though Draft Proposal 4 (JC) is not as strong as it could be in the area of the Farallon Islands, it does surpass the other proposals with respect to the San Gregorio MPA and providing a more extensive protected area in the vicinity of Double Point and Duxbury Reef. If it is not feasible to combine the strengths of various proposals in order to create a more finely tuned and generous final draft, I support Draft Proposal 4.

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